

3. Focus National Efforts on Specific Drug Problems

Different approaches are required to respond adequately to the variety of drug threats our Nation faces. Drug production entities represent specialized industries that demand specific responses. Methamphetamine, in particular, poses a serious threat not only to consumers and those who manufacture it themselves, but also to law enforcement officers who have to make arrests in or near toxic lab sites and clean up those labs. Addressing marijuana production in our national parks requires the technical capacity to locate the fields within large areas as well as air-lift capability to reach the fields.

Actions

A. Counter Domestic Methamphetamine Production [DOJ/DEA, ONDCP/HIDTA]

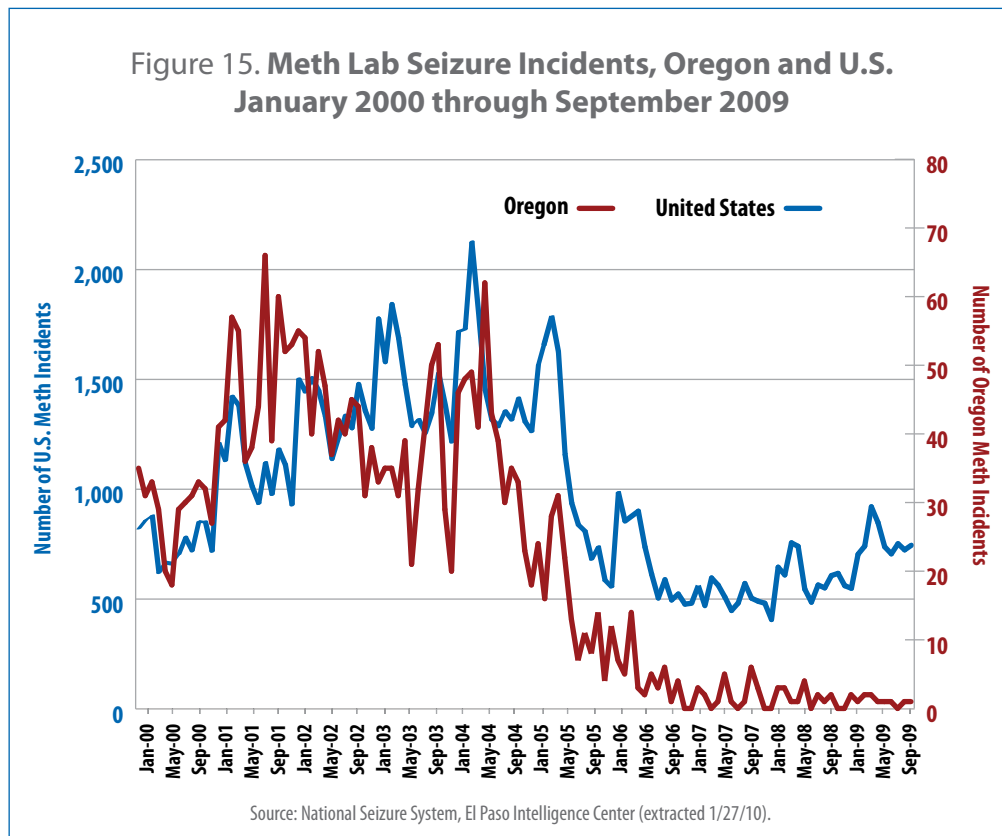
Current Federal and most State laws to control pseudoephedrine, the key ingredient needed to make the most powerful form of methamphetamine, are no longer as effective in addressing the serious threat posed by domestic methamphetamine production as they once were. Drug traffickers and others are now evading these laws and domestically producing methamphetamine in increasing quantities. Teams of pseudoephedrine purchasers, known as “smurfers,” go from store-to-store throughout California and many other states, some even using global positioning system (GPS) devices to map out every location. This smurfing is feeding not only small neighborhood user labs, but also large-scale “super labs” run by drug-trafficking organizations in California. Although it is important to consider the public health benefits of convenient public access to cold medicines such as pseudoephedrine, domestic meth labs pose serious health and safety risks to the public, law enforcement, and children forced to live in or near such toxic environments. In an effort to address this growing threat, some states are now using comprehensive electronic pseudoephedrine sales monitoring systems. However, those efforts have been unable to prevent a resurgence of small-scale meth production in several states. Facing a similar threat, the State of Oregon, in 2006, returned pseudoephedrine to a prescription drug, as it was prior to 1976. Three years later, the results are very encouraging (see Update below). In early 2010, Mississippi enacted a similar law. In light of recent trends, DOJ will conduct a review of how to best enhance our Nation’s approach to countering domestic meth production, including careful consideration of whether our Federal laws must be updated. In addition, NDIC will continue to monitor and report strategic trends in methamphetamine production and precursor chemical smurfing through production of the annual *National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment*.

Update: Oregon’s Approach to Fighting Methamphetamine Labs

In 2008, the Government of Mexico banned pseudoephedrine entirely. This has had a significant positive impact on the control of methamphetamine for both Mexico and the United States. Several countries in Central America have also increased restrictions on sale of pseudoephedrine. However, this has put further pressure to smurf (i.e., make numerous purchases in small amounts) pseudoephedrine and manufacture methamphetamine here in the United States. Short of banning pseudoephedrine in the United States, there is another option that has shown encouraging results.

Effective July 1, 2006, the State of Oregon returned pseudoephedrine to a prescription drug, as it was prior to 1976. There was extensive debate in Oregon as to whether this law would prevent smurfing and

meth labs and whether there would be public outcry or other adverse consequences. More than 3 years later, smurfing within the State of Oregon has been virtually eliminated, meth labs have been nearly eradicated, and local officials report little to no public outcry or other adverse consequences. Oregon's progress is highlighted in the chart below, which compares meth lab seizure trends in Oregon with the national trend. Others have seen this progress and are acting on it. In 2009, New Zealand and a number of local municipalities in Missouri followed Oregon's lead, and early results have also been positive. This approach, as well as others, should be closely examined to enable our Nation to plot a course to effectively address the continuing and growing domestic methamphetamine production threat.



B. Identify Interior Corridors of Drug Movement and Deny Traffickers Use of America's Highways [DOJ/DEA, EPIC, DHS/ICE, CBP, ONDCP/HIDTA]

Drug traffickers employ our Nation's roads and highways to move large amounts of drugs, currency, and weapons, both northbound and southbound. Although many of these drug-trafficking routes are well known, the volume of traffic makes it difficult to interdict this trade. Further, drug traffickers have shown great resourcefulness in building into all types of vehicles hidden compartments that are often difficult and time-consuming for law enforcement officers to locate. To combat this threat, DEA funds training in contraband detection. The HIDTA program, through its Domestic Highway Enforcement initiative, has funded specialized equipment, training, intelligence-sharing activities, and operational